

4TH CALL OF THE FAO-OIE ADVISORY GROUP ON SARS CoV-2 EVOLUTION IN ANIMALS

1st July 2021

Participants: Ann Cullinane (Chair, IEC, Ireland), Daniel Haydon (Glasgow University, UK), Isabella Monne and Luca Tassoni (IZSve, Italy), Linfa Wang (Duke-NUS, Singapore), Leo Poon (HKU), Nicola Lewis (RVC, UK), Cristian de Battisti and Ihab El Masry (FAO), OIE Preparedness & Resilience Department.

Agenda

1. Update scheme for the inventory of priority mutations to be tracked in SARS-CoV2 infections in animals
2. Update to the "OIE Guidance for working with farmed animals of species susceptible to infection of SARS-CoV-2"

Meeting notes

- 1. Update scheme for the inventory of priority mutations to be tracked in SARS-CoV2 infections in animals**

The meeting started with a presentation from Isabella Monne and Luca Tassoni, who collated a list of SARS-CoV-2 variants. The variants included in the current list were not only the ones found exclusively in animals (mutations present in more than one lineage and with more than one identification in animals), but also relevant human variants. Although the list and its classification of variants show an impressive effort, the literature review that was at the origin of the list was not systematic. Therefore, the list shall be improved through a systematic review of the relevant sources.

The Advisory Group congratulated IZSve for their work and proposed a number of modifications to the table. It was noted that the biological relevance of each listed variant is not known, and that a disclaimer on this point should be added to the table. It was agreed that the inventory should be "animal oriented", approaches to present the list of mutations with a special focus on animal markers have been proposed and discussed.

It was decided that the work on the inventory would progress in two phases. In the short term, two members of the Advisory Group will seek the help of colleagues and students from the respective institutions in order to do a systematic review and ensure that the inventory is not missing any important information. On the medium to long term, OIE and FAO would assess the feasibility of tasking one of its Reference Centres with maintaining the inventory as an online database.

- 2. Update to the "OIE Guidance for working with farmed animals of species susceptible to infection of SARS-CoV-2"**

Following-up on the previous meeting's discussion on mink farming and the associated risk pathways for introduction of SARS-CoV-2 to farmed mink populations, the OIE updated the Advisory Group on the changes made to the "OIE Guidance for working with farmed animals of species susceptible to infection of SARS-CoV-2". The changes suggested by the Advisory Group with regards to feed safety were limited to general measures recommended to avoid contamination of feed. The OIE took this opportunity to include in the guidance the conclusions of a risk assessment of the risk to human health posed by international trade in mink fur skins made by its *ad hoc* Group on Safe Trade in Animals and Animal Products. The provisions on the risk of establishment of a reservoir of SARS-CoV-2 in farmed animals, domestic animals,

and wild or feral animals were also updated, considering the latest information shared with the OIE by its Members.

The next meeting of the Advisory Group will take place in the last week of August.